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ABSTRACT

This study is divided into two parts: (1) a review of the theories of group development, particularly as they relate to a classroom setting; and (2) a discussion of the research program which grew out of the theoretical positions. Two to six teachers in each of five junior high schools were involved in using group interaction as a teaching method. Inventories were given to both teachers and students. No hard data is included as computer results were pending. The hypothesis to be examined concerned the difference of responses of those students involved in group teaching techniques and those who were not. (MPJ)

GROUP DEVELOPMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

Barbara Stiltner
February 1973
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Part I

In Life in Classrooms, Philip Jackson (1968) presents a dreary picture of the daily "grind" of the typical student in American public schools. Forced to attend school, many feel like prisoners. Further, although classrooms are crowded with their peers, students are frequently "alone in a crowd." They are surrounded by these peers and yet all too often interchange between them is discouraged if not forbidden. This aloneness, coupled with an evaluation system based on behavior not intrinsically satisfying to the student and the unequal distribution of power in the classroom, in Jackson's view results in conformity and psychological withdrawal of students in the classroom.

This study was an attempt to look at the character of some public school classrooms and an attempt to intervene to help teachers to help students to interact in new ways. The framework for my part of the study comes from theories of group development.

Group development is the study of the changes which occur in a group over a period of time. The emphasis is on what happens to the group as a unit. How do characteristics of the group change over a period of time is a question for group development researchers. Of course, changes which occur in the group will reflect changes occurring in the individual members of the group but the focus is on the changes which are characteristic of most members rather than of individual members. In research in group development we are primarily interested in class averages and characteristics of the class as a group rather than in characteristics of individual group members. I will be briefly discussing several theories or descriptions of the way groups develop and then relating those theories to classrooms and some educational research in the remainder of this presentation.

First, I will present some information about the source of the group development theories to help us in applying them to classroom groups. Generally the development of four different types of groups has been studied: long term therapy groups, training or encounter groups, small groups developed for research purposes and public school or college level classrooms (which have been studied least of all from the group development standpoint). A variety of

methods of study and report have been used, including: the subjective report of the therapist or leader of the group, the use of an objective observer, and the reports of group members usually in an objective question answer format.

Basic to most theories of group development is the distinction between task and emotional functions of groups. People in groups have two different kinds of needs which they try to meet in the group's activity. The integration or lack of integration of the task and emotional functions of the group is a strong indicator of how far the group has developed. Task functions are those activities of the group which are directly related to accomplishing the assigned task of the group. Examples of individual behaviors which further task functions include: the providing of information, the summarizing of the group's progress, and the clarification of provided information. The emotional functions of groups satisfy the emotional needs of group members. They include the interaction of group members as persons. Examples of individual behaviors which fulfill emotional functions include: supporting anothers contribution, helping others to reach compromises, and seeing that everyone has an opportunity to contribute. In applying this distinction to group development, one way of describing a mature group is to say that the group has integrated the

task and emotional functions so that it can work effectively and also meet the needs of its members. Benne and Sheats in 1948 published a description of the many task and emotional functions served by group members. A summary of the stages in the three theories of group development which will be discussed appears in Figure 1. The lines connecting the stages of the various theories indicate rough correspondence between the indicated stages.

Initially, I will describe a theory of group development which is a general description designed to fit a variety of different groups. In 1965, Tuckman surveyed 50 articles describing the development of groups in a wide variety of different settings. His integration is a description of four stages through which groups may pass. He calls these four stages forming, storming, norming, and performing. As with other descriptions of group development each stage must be satisfactorily completed before the group can move onto the succeeding stage. Although the amount of time spent in the different stages may vary considerably, the stages are basically sequential. In each stage a central issue is dealt with or struggled with and when this central issue is satisfactorily resolved the group may move onto the next stage. However, it is possible for the group to return to stages which had been previously dealt with and again

Three Descriptions of Group Development Compared

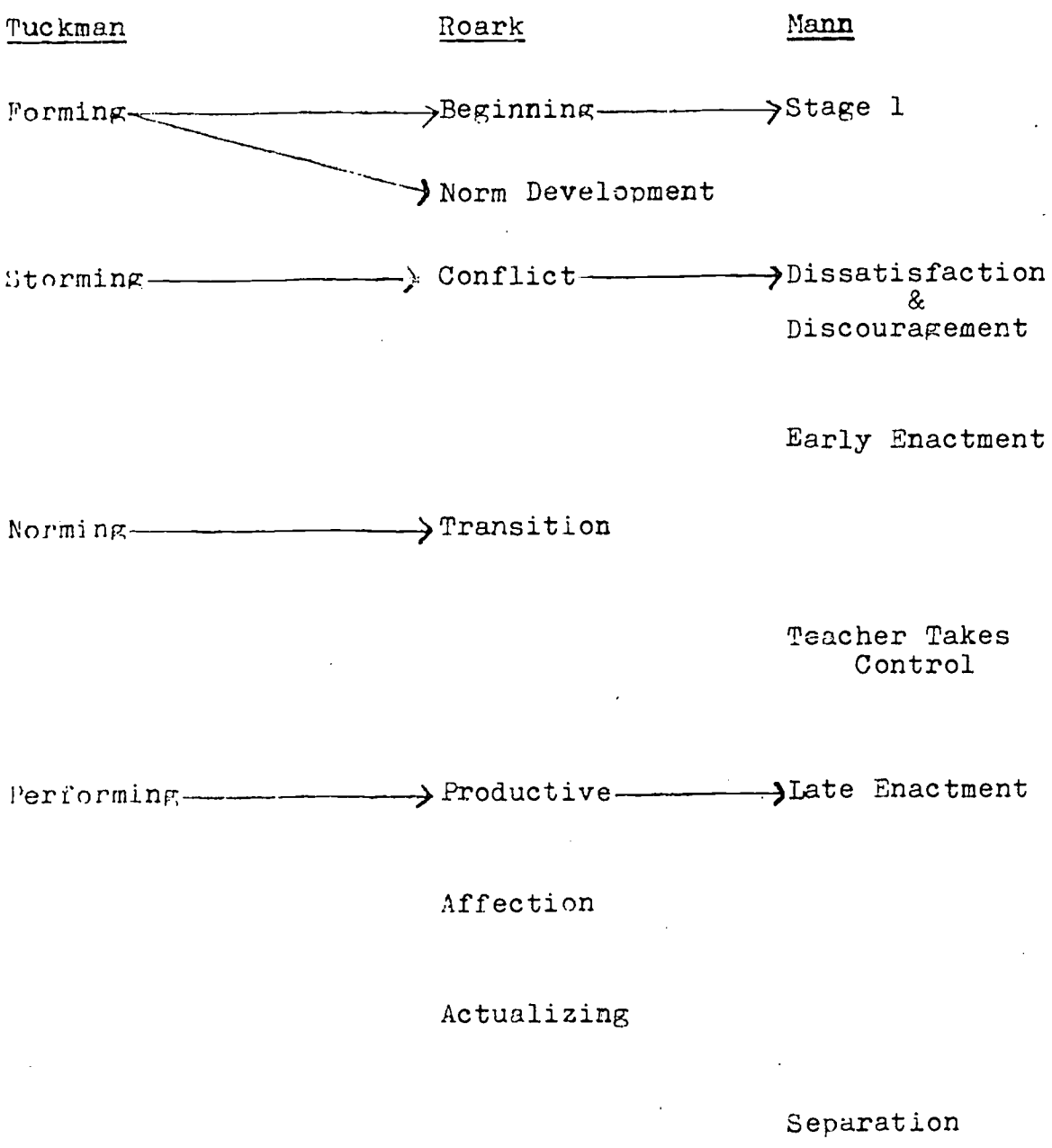

Figure 1: Arrows indicate the similarity of the stages in the different descriptions.

deal with the same issue on a different level or in a different context.

Tuckman's four stages are characterized by the following:

Forming -- orientation, testing and dependence constitute group process
(do I fit here, tell me what we will do, is it safe)

Storming -- resistance to the group influence and task requirements; emotional responding to the task; conflict and polarization around interpersonal issues

Norming -- develop ingroup feeling and cohesiveness new standards evolve, new roles adopted task intimate personal opinions expressed

Performing -- interpersonal structure becomes tool of task activities; flexibility of roles; energy goes toward task

A second theory of group development based both on the research in the field and on the developer's experience with a variety of classroom groups was developed by Roark. It is a seven stage description and appears quite applicable to public school classrooms. A chart summarizing this theory appears on the two following pages.

DIMENSIONS OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

	Interaction Pattern	Process & Focus	Communication
Stage 1 BEGINNING	Randomness or leader centered pairing & sub-grouping	Confusion Searching Protective & seeking allies	Guarded, Constricted, topic & situation centered
Stage 2 NORM DEVELOPMENT	Erratic, tentative usually leader centered or leader directed	Testing limits Seeking answers Trial balloons leadership tests	Security oriented Situation centered Little self disclosure
Stage 3 CONFLICT	Erratic, centers on one person &/or pair depending on issue, or random.	Confrontive Hostile Anxious Conflict	One way distorted labeling some self disclosure usually in anger or retaliation
Stage 4 TRANSITION	Less erratic, patterns develop, less centered on leader or leader	Vacilate between task & group concerns Focus on new norms & personal feelings	Self disclosure & feedback--more open & less labeling
Stage 5 PRODUCTIVE	Interaction pattern based on task at hand -- pattern at other times	Cooperation Group leadership, group is a group, we. purpose	Open, within limits of disclosure, feedback & intimacy norms

Dimensions of Group Development (continued)

	Interaction Pattern	Process & Focus	Communication
Stage 6 AFFECTION	Group centered but moving to individual in focus -- norms	I-Thou interaction often. intimacy norms changed to more intimacy.	More self disclosure & risk Positive feedback
Stage 7 ACCUALIZING	Pattern appropriate to task usually group centered	Flexible. move from task to person to group as appropriate	Open constructive accurate--based on being rather than need.

(Stanford and Roark, in Press)

Finally, Mann conducted a research study involving continuous observation of several discussion sections of a college psychology course. The role of the graduate assistant instructors appeared to combine those of presenter of information, and stimulator and leader of discussion. A slightly different pattern of stages emerged from this study. The storming was less clearcut and there did not appear to be a real norming stage. Also several aspects of the groups development not frequently studied in other group development studies were emphasized.

First stage:
Teacher - warmth
Students - challenging, shallow personal expression of experience, some support of teacher.

Dissatisfaction and discouragement:
Teacher - punitiveness in reaction to lack of work and involvement of students, makes conscious changes in class.
Students - discouraged high concealment, anxious dependency.

Early enactment:
Student - more participation but is a tentative attempt, toward end of stage more contention and challenge.
Teacher - facilitative, reactive style and increasing dissatisfaction with student participation.

Teacher takes control:
Teacher - proactive, lecture, shows dominance and formality.
Students - feel rejected but also show consent toward the teacher.
Both - mutual trust increases.

Late enactment:
Teacher - less formal, more like colleague, casual, less punitive.
Students - intelligent participation.
Both - appear more at ease with roles.

Separation:
Teacher - rush to cover last of material and to resolve affective conflicts.
Students - warm but sometimes unresponsive.

One of my concerns is that it appears that the development of the group is strongly influenced by the behavior of its leader. Many of the groups which have been studied have had fairly non-directive leaders. When applying group development research to classrooms the difference in leadership styles may be important. Perhaps some of the differences between Tuckman and Mann's descriptions result from the leadership differences. Although there has been no research relating the style of leadership to the development of groups, a few inferences can be made by comparing the different studies. There appears to be a trend for the intensity of the storming stage to be inversely related to the degree of direction furnished by the leader. Part of the roots of the conflict stage is theorized to be the leader's failure to fulfill the needs of the dependent group members. They want to be told what to do and the group leader does not in many cases meet this request. When the leader fulfills the needs of the dependent group members by furnishing

them with the strong leadership they demand they are not as likely to confront the leader leading to the conflict. An extreme case of the conflict stage occurs in the Bennis and Shepard (1956) description where they state that the group must physically or symbolically throw the leader out of the group in order to achieve higher stages of development. However, in Mann's classroom groups where there was a great deal of structure provided by the instructor, the storming stage was rather weak and unfocused.

Jack Gibb (1964) is one theorist who has discussed leadership style and group development. Gibb describes two ends of a continuum of leadership style with the terms persuasive and participative. The persuasive leader does not trust the group members to act beneficially on behalf of the group, and therefore, takes a directive role. On the other hand the participative leader trusts and accepts group members and allows them more latitude in determining the decisions related to the goals of the group. Gibb feels that only with participative leadership can groups reach maturity.

Another theorist and researcher whose work may be relevant here is Fiedler (1967). His research has been mainly with working, intact groups and has been concerned mostly with productivity. He has attempted to categorize

groups in several different ways. One way is to look at the amount of interaction required between group members to accomplish the task. School classes in many cases would fall into his category of coacting groups where group members work individually on separate aspects of a project. Most of his work has been with interacting groups where members work together on a task and everyone's input is needed to complete the work. He has divided the groups in this category into nine types on the basis of their type of leader member relations, structure of the task (ambiguity or clarity), and the power inherent in the leader's position. Finally, of interest to us here he has developed a brief inventory which can be used to classify leaders on their stated tendency to emphasize the task aspects of their jobs or the interpersonal aspects of the group. Unfortunately, as with other multifactor studies his results are complex and can not be easily summarized. For those who are interested in pursuing his work further, the February 1973 issue of Psychology Today contains an article by Fiedler which describes his work in this area. It seems to me that some of the different factors which he has used in his studies could very profitably be considered in refining group development research. I would seriously question whether coacting groups would advance very far on the

continuum of group development.

Finally, in analyzing the issue of leadership in the development of classroom groups there is another framework which can be used. That is the Rogerian concept of helping relationships and his description of the qualities of the effective helping person. He postulates three necessary and sufficient conditions which the helper must offer if the relationship is to be effective. Of course, they are the offering of empathy, congruence, and positive regard. In Freedom to Learn (1969) Rogers describes several teachers whom he feels exhibit his necessary and sufficient conditions. Miss Shiel, a sixth grade teacher, whom Rogers uses as an example, initiated a student-centered program where students planned their own work within broad guidelines set by the teacher. At the conclusion of the term she reported such outcomes in her students as reduced quarreling, better self-understanding, ability to develop and follow their own standards and values, and finally greater academic achievement than ordinarily would have been expected from both high and low ability students as well as continued growth in social and communication skills. Rogers also describes other teachers who had similar results. Although the concern here is mainly with individual student

growth there does also seem to be an accompanying growth in the classes as a whole.

When we move into the realm of educational research of a more objective character we find less clear cut relationships than in the theoretical framework of Rogers. One of the difficulties is that most educational research has been concerned with cognitive outcomes--particularly those that are easy to measure. A few studies have used the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory which is based on Rogers theory (Emmerling, 1961, Mason, 1970, Mason and Blumberg, 1969, and Schlesinger, 1968). Generally, these studies have shown a correlational relationship between student perception of their teachers as measured by Barrett-Lennard and student learning. A number of studies have tried to develop more precise methods of describing teacher behavior. Ryan's (1960) classic study is an example of this work. One important pattern of teacher behavior which he found was "warm, understanding, friendly versus aloof, egocentric, restricted teacher behavior." He found some relationship between the teacher's behavior pattern and student behavior at the elementary school level. In another study Soar (1961) measured teacher directness, concreteness of teacher goals and pupil anxiety and concluded "the

results also suggest that the teacher should be warm and supportive in teaching all objectives." Most descriptions of teacher warmth appear to include Rogers' empathy, elements of unconditional positive regard and enthusiasm. There appears to be enough support for the importance of Rogers' facilitative conditions as offered by teachers to justify their inclusion as a factor in research in classroom group development.

Part II

In this part of the program we will attempt to describe briefly the research program which grew out of the theoretical positions presented in the first section of this program. Unfortunately, due to a number of problems including our difficulty in communicating with the world of computers we have been unable to subject our data to the all important significance tests. Therefore, we will report here on the process we went through in gathering the data.

First, I will briefly describe the sample of teachers with which we worked and how the study was set up. The teachers participating in the study were all employed by the school district serving Jefferson County, Colorado. This large suburban area is located west of Denver and is composed primarily of white middle-class residents. The

teachers who participated in the study came from five junior high schools in the district and teach a variety of subject matter and grade levels.

The teachers were recruited in the following manner. The principal of each school was approached and the nature of the study was explained. If the principal approved of the project, a request was made to allow us to introduce the project to the teachers during a regular faculty meeting. At the faculty meeting we briefly explained our expectations of those teachers participating in the study and described what we were offering them. A follow-up meeting for those teachers considering participating in the study was held to answer questions. Printed notices explaining the study were also placed in teacher's mailboxes at all schools. Of the eight schools approached, three are not represented in the study. One principal refused to allow the project at his school and two schools did not produce any volunteers. Part of this non-volunteering was probably the result of our timing. We recruited during the final weeks of the school year when teachers are very busy.

All teachers understood that in volunteering they needed to meet the following requirements: teach two sections of a class in which group interaction could be used as a teaching method, be willing to use the training

(outlined in Learning Discussion Skills Through Games by Stanford and Stanford)

exercises extensively with their students during the early weeks of school in one class and not use the exercises in the other class, be willing to use group interaction at least two times per week for the remainder of the semester with the one class and not with the other, be willing to participate in a one-day training workshop before the start of the school year, and allow the administration of short instruments to their students and observation of their classes. The one day workshop was approved by the Jefferson County In-service Supervisor for one-half credit.

The use of volunteer teachers limits the external validity of this study. However, it is doubtful that teachers would be effective in applying the treatment to their classrooms if they were coerced to do so. Therefore, the requirements of participation in the study were made as clear as possible in the interest of obtaining teachers who would be committed to carrying out their part of the agreement.

Basically our design is a simple one. We have five schools. Within each school we have from 2 to 6 teachers teaching a variety of subject matters and grade levels. Each teacher had two classes which participated in the study. One class, the treatment group, completed the sequence of activities which Gene has described and used group discussion

as a teaching method. The other class did not complete the activities but could use group discussion if the teacher desired. For convenience we called these classes experimental and control.

The following data was collected in connection with the Group Development aspects of this study: two teacher inventories, observation of affective behavior in the classroom, two student classroom atmosphere inventories, and sociometric data.

The two teacher inventories were administered at the beginning of the training workshop and were designed to help in studying the leadership role of the teacher and then to relate this role to the group development of the classes. The first instrument was the Barrett-Lennard (Barrett-Lennard 1962) which was developed to measure the Rogerian necessary and sufficient conditions in helping relationships. The four scales of the inventory are empathy, congruence, level of regard and unconditionality of regard. A total score was also computed because studies have shown that in helping relationships outside therapy there is less differentiation in the individual's scores on the four scales. The teachers were asked to use their ideal relationship with students as a referent in completing the inventory. There does appear to be some variance in the scores on the

four scales, particularly on the unconditionality of regard scale.

The second teacher inventory was the Fiedler Most and Least Preferred Coworker inventory, which differentiates between the individual who appears to be the type of leader who is more concerned with establishing good interpersonal relations and the leader who is more concerned with the task aspects of his job. There is a reasonable amount of variance in the teacher's scores on this instrument.

The remaining data was collected at four different times during the period from mid-September to mid-December of the fall semester 1972. The data collections were approximately one month apart. The following three types of data were collected at the four different times: observation, student classroom atmosphere inventories and sociometric.

One-half of the classrooms in the study were observed using the Fuller Affective Interaction Records system. The Fair includes 33 different categories of teacher and student behaviors and was selected for its comprehensive coverage of both teacher and pupil affective behavior. The categories include such teacher and pupil behaviors as expression of enthusiasm, resistance, etc. It is based on five dimensions of behavior: responding vs. initiating, other vs. self

direction, approval vs. disapproval, excluding vs. including, and permitting vs. restricting. Although the analysis of this observation data is not complete there does appear to be a trend which supports the effect of the exercises on the experimental classes. One of the student categories was student comments which were self initiated and not in response to a direct question by the teacher. This category occurred more frequently in the experimental classes in December and further showed a gradual increase in the experimental classes over time.

At each of the four measurement times two classroom atmosphere instruments were administered to students. The first three times a random third of the class took each instrument. Therefore, no student in any class took the instruments more than twice. The first instrument was drawn from some of the scales of the Harvard Project Physics Study (Learning Environment Inventory). The scales included were those measuring cohesiveness, friction, favoritism, apathy, democracy, cliqueness, satisfaction, goal direction, and competitiveness. There appears to be little variance in the student scores on this instrument. All analysis will be done using class averages. The second instrument was the Classroom Atmosphere Questionnaire developed by James

Hoffmeister. It includes two factors: the students perception of the teacher as accepting and understanding and the students perception of the teacher as helping the students in classroom problem solving skills. There is some variance in student scores on this instrument.

Finally a simple sociometric instrument was administered to all students in all classes involved in the study at each of the four times. Students were asked to name five persons with whom they would like to work on a class project and to name any students with whom they would refuse to work. A number of different indices have been computed from the sociometric data. Again all data is in terms of the total class and not individual students. There is a great deal of variance in these various scores and the possibility of some significant differences.

In pulling the parts of this presentation together I would like to briefly state the questions and hypotheses which these various pieces of data are directed toward answering. (1) A basic question concerns whether or not the data collected can be pieced together to fit into any of the current schemes of group development. Hopefully when all the results have been analyzed, a somewhat coherent picture will be formed that will partially at least fit some of the theories. (2) Secondly, if the first question

is answered positively, did the intervention of the provided activities influence the group development process. The greater student initiated response in the experimental classes is one tiny bit of evidence which when fitted into a total pattern may help to answer the question in the affirmative. The formal hypotheses concern the difference between the two groups on the different measures and the possibility of interaction effects.

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